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Key Panther Figure Ruled Competent

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NEW HAVEN, Aug. 4—George Sams Jr., a key state witness in the torture-murder case against eight Black Panthers, was adjudged competent to testify today after a court-appointed psychiatrist described him as "extremely sensitive" and quick to feel remorse for rash acts.

Sams, who contends his order to kill Alex Rackley came directly from national Panther Party chairman Bobby G. Seale, is scheduled to take the witness stand Thursday when the trial of Black Panther Lonnie McLucas resumes after a day's recess.

McLucas, the first of the accused to face trial, is charged with kidnaping resulting in the death 15 months ago of the 24-year-old fellow Black Panther from New York City.

Defense lawyers contend that Sams is a mental defective who engineered Rackley's death on his own while the state claims he was carrying out orders relayed from Seale. One witness described Sams as a violent, brutal and sadistic man.

A court-appointed psychiatrist, Dr. Robert B. Miller, superintendent of the Fairfield Hills State Hospital in Newtown, testified that Sams has an explosive personality disorder. "In slang, he's someone with a short fuse," Dr. Miller said. Asked "Is he callous?" Dr. Miller said, "I think George Sams extremely sensitive . . . tremendously concerned with how others feel about him . . . quite cold about something one minute and very remorseful the next."